

book: assuming archaeology has changed significantly since 1979, does he feel that all his points are still relevant today? The re-publication of *Préhistoire du futur* is an excellent initiative, which will please both those who knew about the book before, and those interested in the history and theory of French archaeology.

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ALICE ROBERTS, illustrated by JAMES WESTON LEWIS. 2020. *Human journey*. London: Red Shed; 978-1-4052-9145-3 paperback £12.99.



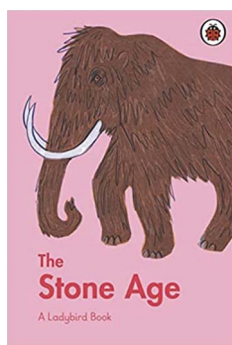
Books about prehistory for younger readers help shape attitudes to our deep past, so it is interesting to explore how new publications reflect this rapidly changing field.

Alice Roberts' *Human journey* offers a highly accessible introduction to prehistory for upper primary and lower secondary school children. Ably complemented by James Weston Lewis's engaging illustrations, Alice Roberts traces human progression, out of Africa and across the Old World, from the hunter-gatherers on the savannahs down to Neolithic settlement. Throughout, the emphasis is on human ingenuity and adaptability, in diverse and often challenging environments. While the book strongly reflects current archaeological interpretations, it makes clear that we still do not have all the answers. Thus, alternative theories are offered dispassionately; for example, whether humans settled islands intentionally or by accident, and whether antler head dresses were for hunting or ritual. In particular, the complexities of interactions between modern humans and Neanderthals are well rehearsed. Both differences and commonalities of physiology and culture are explored, our own partial Neanderthal ancestry is noted, and no comment is passed on our fellow species' extinction.

James Weston Lewis has used the diorama style of presentation to illustrate a sequence of 21 vignettes, enabling a broad overview of each setting. Colours are bright, outlines are crisp and characters are active and lively. It is pleasing to see women and children engaged in tasks once thought the preserve of older males, such as hunting and making art.

Alice Roberts has packed a lot into 43 pages, with commendable economy of exposition, and with well-balanced text and images. Three big challenges for books about prehistory are how to convey the immense passage of time, how to avoid a sense of teleological progression and how to shun the suggestion that one geographical timeline is superior to any other. I think that these are all well met, in particular, with the map and timeline on the last pages, integrating the vignettes within a global context. Overall, this book is a good read in its own right and should prove a valuable starting point for further classroom or personal investigation.

SIDRA ANSARI & CHRIS FENTON THOMAS, illustrated by ROSIE HAINE 2022. *A Ladybird book: the Stone Age*. London: Penguin Random House; 978-0-241-54419-8 hardback £5.99.



Sidra Ansari's and Chris Fenton-Thomas's *The Stone Age* is also suitable for upper primary and lower secondary students. Here, the approach is topic driven. Thus, after brief accounts of the first peoples and how they spread from Africa, we learn about shelter, painting, hunting, fire, extreme climate, farming and clothing, along the transition to the Neolithic. While *The Stone Age* covers very similar ground to *Human journey*, it is stylistically quite different. The feel is much more of being explicitly educated, rather than guided through a broad scenario. Thus, between vignettes such as those in *Human journey*, we are given pre-digested summaries of useful facts, for example, of lithic periods, stone tool types, gatherable plants, and

animals. This all seems like fodder for assessment.

Further, where *Human journey* considers many different environments, being unspecific about where things happened, *The Stone Age* has a North-west European bias and is often disconcertingly precise. In particular, there is an emphasis on Britain, indeed on Scotland. Skara Brae is presented as if it were an archetype of Neolithic architecture, and, in the final vignette, which pleasingly promotes archaeology as a worthwhile discipline, the Ness of Brodgar and Kilmartin Glen—more Scottish locations—are identified as sites of ongoing interest.

Rosie Haine's illustrations contrast with James Weston Lewis's, offering less detailed depictions, with a more restricted palette. Nonetheless, again the illustrations ably complement the text, and again, they disrupt outdated notions of gender roles. Women weave and men sew. Men milk goats and women collect eggs. A woman and man fish together: the baby is on the man's back. It is nice to see a young girl using her hand as a stencil for cave painting, reflecting the results of recent research.

While *The Stone Age* is roughly the same length as *Human journey*, it is almost one quarter of the size, greatly constraining both exposition and images. Overall, it tries to pack in too much for an introduction but would make a useful companion to *Human journey*.

Both books offer hopeful signs that popularisations of prehistory can reflect a more thoughtful, cautious and research-led archaeology, pushing back against long-lived processual certainties. Thirty years ago, Stephanie Moser (1993) and Diana Gifford-Gonzalez (1993) systematically documented gendered stereotypes, in images and dioramas respectively. More recently, Nena Galanidou's (2007, 2008) surveys of late twentieth and early twenty-first century children's books found that they continued to portray the same tropes; Julie Solometo and Joshua Moss (2013) have observed how slowly such popular representations change. While we undoubtedly still need strong corrective interventions within the discipline, such as those of Laura Coltofean-Arizancu and colleagues (2021), as Galanidou (2007, 2008) has observed, children's books also influence their adult readers. Thus, *Human journey* and *The Stone Age* are significant efforts towards wider, more progressive understandings of prehistory.

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